

Florin Japanese American Citizens League  
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview  
with  
**MRS. FUMIKO DEGUCHI**

April 19, 1988  
Sacramento, California

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# JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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## PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast, devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Many Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin, or have relatives and friends who once had ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the spirit of the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Several hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in the relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind. They were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their 70's, 80's and 90's. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jackie Reinier, former Director of the Oral History Program at California State University in Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also wish to acknowledge the project members, volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation, and the Taisho Young Mens Association which contributed some of their assets as they dissolved their corporation on December 31, 1991.



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#### INTERVIEWER'S PERSONAL COMMENTS:

In Mrs. Deguchi, we see the remarkable strength of the Issei, the first generation of Japanese immigrants. Perhaps there is no other group of parents more revered than the Issei.

Mrs. Deguchi single-handedly reared her children coping with many adversities. Her responsibilities also included her aging in-laws and her handicapped husband. "I had to drive," she said, "and so I got in the car and did the best I knew." She was pleased that she got to the grocery store and back.

Just when the family was emerging from the depression, the evacuation order of 1942 wiped them out and sent them to internment camps along with 120,000 persons of "more than 1/16th Japanese blood." She agonized over how to keep the family intact. She and the children were allotted one room in the barracks in the desert where they lived until the ban on the west coast was lifted and they were released.

Her youngest child was five when they returned home to start all over again. With the same determination, she spent every daylight hour working on the farm, while at night she cared for her family's needs.

Mrs. Deguchi leaves us a legacy of the Issei woman, of total devotion to family and tremendous inner fortitude. Life can be happy or sad; it's how one sees it, she says.



Mrs. Fumiko Deguchi, BD: July 1, 1904

#### SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

Mrs. Deguchi immigrated to the United States soon after her arranged marriage on the fourth of September, 1923. Her husband had very poor vision and was sickly. The arrangement included his mother and father. It was planned that she was to become a midwife as it was a lucrative field, but she refused. They bought thirty-five acres in the eastern part of Sacramento county.

By 1942, the family had grown to six children ranging in ages from one to seventeen years and grandparents. Mrs. Deguchi was head of the household, working on the farm, learning to drive and rearing the family. Purse-strings were held tightly by Ojiisan (grandfather and her father-in-law).

Executive Order 9066 uprooted the family, forcing them to sell their belongings for much needed money in preparation for the internment. How to keep the family together was Mrs. Deguchi's main concern. She took a rope so that she could tie the little children to Grandpa and Grandma while she and her eldest son Frank would carry the baggage.

The family was incarcerated at Pinedale Assembly Center for two and a half months and then transferred to Poston Camp in the Arizona desert on the Colorado River Indian Reservation where temperatures would often exceed 125 degrees. She took English lessons from Mr. John Shinju Sato while there.

Four years later, with the lifting of the ban on the west coast, the family returned home to begin all over again. With the help of the older children, she worked in the hop fields to earn money while starting a new field of strawberry plants at home.

At 88, Mrs. Deguchi enjoys her garden of flowers which she arranges for the church every Sunday. She is active, independent and still drives a car. And she is surrounded by a loving family.



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SATO-VIACRUSIS: Your address and phone number, please.

DEGUCHI: 3808 32nd Avenue, Sacramento, 95824; (916) 421-3234.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: What was your childhood experience in Japan?

DEGUCHI: My father served in the Japanese army during the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and got injured really bad. He walked with a little limp. Since he could not walk to town to work, he got a job at the village office. My mother had thirteen children. I was the oldest, and until my brother was born, I was supposed to take over the family line. Therefore, my parents really took good care of me. But, after my brother was born when I was thirteen years old, I was asked to go to America to marry a man and work as a midwife, because they made good money and returned home. But, I did not want to be a midwife, nor a nurse.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Was it when you were thirteen years old?



DEGUCHI: A little later. There was an exam to advance to a higher education and my aunt recommended that I go to a midwife school, since I had to attend the school after all. Yet, all of a sudden, the man with whom I was to be married passed away. Therefore, my husband came to Japan to marry me. So, I came here. My mother also said that I should go to America, and my father told me that if it did not work out, I could come back anytime. But, once we came here, we could not go back because we did not have the money and we had many children to care for.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: My father did farming along 47th Avenue.

DEGUCHI: Yes, the Ogawas, the Machidas, and the Kawamuras lived around there. Roy Kawamura had American citizenship, so we all bought land in his name. Then, we divided the tract into four, one for each family. The Machidas and the Ogawas preferred to have the front tracts, so we had the back. I said any place is all right for us.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How old were you when you came here?

DEGUCHI: I was nineteen years old. We did farming at the ranch near Fruitridge with the Kawamuras. I had two options: working as a midwife in town or farming at the ranch. I did not want to be a midwife, and my husband would not be able to help me at all for it. We also had a chance to take over the Tamagawa-Do, but my mother-in-law did not like the idea, so we bought the ranch.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How come you bought the land there?

DEGUCHI: I do not know, because it was the Kawamuras who found the place. Land was cheap everywhere. After World War II, we bought 7 acres from the Fairbairns, for we had many boys. It was around 1947. But, we sold the land soon because Frank did not want to be



a farmer and neither did Willie. We were only paying taxes, so we figured it would be better to sell the land.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: When you were here, did you grow strawberries?

DEGUCHI: Around February of 1924, we leased land in the name of Toshiro Rikimaru from an Italian man. My father-in-law did farming. It was like leasing the land on our own.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How many children did you have?

DEGUCHI: Betty was the last one. The Kawamuras moved in March when Betty was still in me. We finally moved from the "boy house" (the house for laborers) two months after that. The "boy house" of those days were rough, with straw for mattresses. Our house then turned into a labor camp. Since we had to move in November, we could not grow strawberries in that year.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Name all the children, please.

DEGUCHI: Frank, Betty, and Willie. Starting in January, Reverend Muraoka came to the Machidas to begin the Sunday school. I lived in the next door, so every Saturday I took our four-month old baby and Frank there for Sunday school. If it was raining, I drove there.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Did you get a license in the US?

DEGUCHI: I had not had it for the first ten years, because we did not have a car. Then, we bought a Ford pickup. There was a streetcar station at the intersection of Fruitridge and Stockton, so my mother-in-law used to walk there and took the streetcar to the town to shop. I was pregnant at that time and I got carsick, so I did not want to take the streetcar. When everybody was busy, I could not go anywhere, so I decided to get a license for myself. Nobody really taught me how, but in those days driving was not difficult.



SATO-VIACRUSIS: But, you had to crank.

DEGUCHI: No, you only had to step on the pedal. If not, then you had to crank, but usually it was not necessary to crank. Nobody showed me how to drive, but the first time I drove I had to back my car from the garage to the street and I had no problem doing that. So, I got confident and drove all the way to the Oshima store.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: You were so brave. You must have been a strong person.

DEGUCHI: You had no other choice. Issei had to be strong. When I was in Japan, people told me that I was such a quiet person. So when I first returned to Japan sixteen years later, everyone was so surprised, saying, "you are completely different." I said, "You cannot survive in America unless you get strong." It was so inconvenient, so I learned how to drive myself. Since there were not many cars at the time, I had no accidents. About ten years later, we all had to take examinations to receive a license. It was after 1930. So, I asked at the Japanese garage and brought a Nisei with me (I paid him a little money) to take the exam so I could understand the English. Of course, I paid for that. Then, at the test, the Nisei told me not to move my head when I answered the questions. They would not take it as "yes" or "no." So, I had to say "yes" or "no" clearly. I took the test with the fake car. After the war, however, we all had to take the test by ourselves. We learned how to read and write English in camp. Your father taught me. At the Poston camp, I went to the Adult Education class. Then, after the war, we went to Walnut Grove. . . I had no problem understanding the spoken English when I took the driving test in Lodi. I went to Lodi twice because we could only get two-



year licenses. Meanwhile, I started housework and went to Sacramento often.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Was it after the war?

DEGUCHI: Yes. At first, the test was one-to-one. But later, it was implemented for many people at one time, using the phonograph. You had to go to the test place when you were told to come, but I worked so I asked them to allow me to take the test privately. Then, the person told me to try it anyway because I could fill the application with no problem. When I tried, I got one-hundred percent!

SATO-VIACRUSIS: The test was done in English, right? Did you learn English at the camp?

DEGUCHI: Yes. Unlike the prewar days, our children spoke English at home, then I got used to English day by day. Then, I got a hundred percent, so the DMV person was amazed.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Did you also take a driving test?

DEGUCHI: Yes, I did. I had not driven a car for two years since I came back from the camp, so I was a little afraid. But, I drove before the war, so I passed the test anyway. I was told to practice parallel parking four times. Even now, I am not good at parallel parking. In those days, cars had no power steering so it was even more difficult. Anyway, I have been driving for almost sixty-three years.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How old are you now?

DEGUCHI: Eighty-four. I was born on July 1, but my parents reported to the village office in Japan that I was born before April 1. A child born before April 1 could go to school one year earlier than those born after April 1. My parents wanted me to finish school as soon as



possible, so they registered that I was born in March. My brothers and sisters were born in November so it was not possible to manipulate, so their birthdays were registered as they were. My parents even paid fines for changing my birthday because the village office thought my parents had been negligent by not reporting my birthday during these months. The fine was fifty sen (a half yen). So my birthday is officially in March, but in reality it is in July.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Was it 1904?

DEGUCHI: Yes. You had to be fifteen years old to go to the school for midwifery. My father was working at the village office and I went to the school at the age of sixteen. Then I took an exam to get a license. My license said that I was born in 1904. When you came to the United States at that time, you had to be at least eighteen years old. But, I was under eighteen, so I was detained at Angel Island for a long time.

Still now, two of my school friends are alive. Others are all dead. There is one living in the United States, and another in Japan. The first one is living in Sacramento, too. When I became eighty years old, I received social security two years earlier than her, although we are the same age. She is now in a retirement home. I am so happy, because I live with my family. The one in Japan often wrote to my brother in Japan because they live very close.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: You said there were thirteen brothers and sisters in your family, right?

DEGUCHI: Now there are only six of them alive. Before the war there were



eight, but one of my brothers was killed in the war and so was my sister.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: I want to ask you about the camp. Was it difficult for you?

DEGUCHI: My parents-in-law were old, so they could not carry baggage. Before we went to the camp, we were still picking the strawberries. But, Mr. Abe's father-in-law came to our place and said, "you better not pick the strawberries because you cannot bring money with you to the camp." He told us that even though we worked hard in the fields, we would not be able to enjoy the profit, so stop doing it, etc., etc. My father-in-law talked with him for a long time, so Mrs. Hayashi and I worked in the fields. But we could not take much money.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How many acres of land did you own at the time?

DEGUCHI: Thirty-five acres. For strawberries, there were six to seven acres. We picked up only new crops, because we could not hire anybody. My father-in-law helped a little, but everytime we started working, Mr. Abe came to him to talk. Usually Mr. Hayashi helped me. Besides, I had to pack the necessities for relocation. Since no one else knew about the house matter, I did everything by myself during the day and night. When you went to the camp, you took only a few bags, and my parents-in-law could not carry anything because of their age. So, I had Betty carry my baby on her back, and Willy, Frank, and I took all of the bags. The little children were tied to my father-in-law by a rope so that they would not be lost.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: You really went through a tough time, didn't you?

DEGUCHI: Frank was seventeen years old, Betty fifteen years old, and Willie



eight years old. There were also a six year old child, a four year old child, and a one year old baby. So, I thought I would tie them to my parents-in-law to go to camp.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: You did everything.

DEGUCHI: I had to. I put some belongings in a garage, and disposed of others.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: You did not even know where you would be sent to; whether it would be a cold place or a hot place.

DEGUCHI: Well, in Fresno (Assembly center), we had to decide whether to go Poston or to Tule Lake. I heard Tule Lake was very cold, with lots of snow. I had elderly people and small children in my family, so I decided to go to Poston because I thought we could somehow deal with hot weather. My father-in-law had the same idea, I guess. You know you have to worry about clothes and everything if you went to a cold place. So we went to Poston.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: My father took all kinds of things with him by hiding them in blankets. I was just eighteen years old. You did not know where to go. We were so worried, carrying small children with us . . .

DEGUCHI: I did not really worry that much. The only thing I was concerned about was clothes. We did not take much food with us. There were only me and Frank who could take things, anyway.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: There were many people who had a difficult time.

DEGUCHI: But, I think that (going to camp) was not so bad at all. If you had stayed here, you could have faced even more difficult circumstances. Especially, the Filipinos were bad. Mr. Kobata's house was taken over by about ten Filipino laborers. A foreman used them for his farm. We had our foreman take care of our farm. But a thief had broken into our house and stolen everything.



SATO-VIACRUSIS: Did you still have a stove when you returned to your house after the war?

DEGUCHI: There was a stove left in our house, I guess. But, I don't remember much. I'm sure that there was an ice box. I guess there was a stove, too.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: We did not have a stove at our house. Neither did Mrs. Kawamura. So, we all cooked outside for a while after we returned from the camp.

DEGUCHI: Is that so? My house was rented out, so there was not much problem. We initially planned to come back in January.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: 1945?

DEGUCHI: Yes. But, it was around Christmas time when we were allowed to return to the west coast. Because we rented our house out, we had to give our tenant at least one month to move out. So, in February, we finally returned home. So, I believe there was a stove. It was cold at the time.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How was the condition of your house?

DEGUCHI: The foreman cleaned up the house and he even put flowers in the house. We arrived in Stockton at night, and we came to Sacramento by bus. There were not any trains.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: All the way from Poston?

DEGUCHI: No. Between Poston and Stockton, we took a train. Then, we came to Sacramento by bus and to the Tanigawa's place by taxi. We came back with the Kawamuras and the Takeharas. But, the Takeharas arrived here one day before us to prepare for our return. They got everything ready so that we could all rest right away. The Kawamuras and our family slept on the floor of the Takeharas'



residence for the first night. Then, on the following day, we moved back to our house. We kept our truck during the wartime, so we fixed it soon.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: I am amazed that no one stole it.

DEGUCHI: Yes. Our tenant kept an eye on it. He used it during the war. But, we had sold a pickup truck and a car...

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Our car, tractor, and everything else were taken by somebody during the war.

DEGUCHI: We sold everything but the truck, because we did not have money. We did not get any profit for strawberries in 1942. We thought we might need the truck later, so we had our tenant use it during the war.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Did you work on the farm by yourself?

DEGUCHI: No. The tenant took care of the farm. We allowed him to get all the profit on the condition that he pay taxes. Before the war, we sold grapes at \$30 per ton, but when we came back, he told us that he could sell them at \$125-\$130 per ton. The Takeharas, the Umedas, the Kawamuras, and the Obatas also had their own foremen, and they (their foremen) all made big profits during the war.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Did the foremen take all of the income?

DEGUCHI: Yes, but he paid taxes for us. He already completed pruning when we returned here. The Kawamuras had planted new trees before the evacuation, and their foreman kept the trees in very good condition. So, when we came back we first picked the grapes on these trees together. Then, we planted strawberries in March and worked on a hop farm, too.



SATO-VIACRUSIS: Your foreman was Jack?

DEGUCHI: No. It was Jim Fairbairn.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: You worked really hard.

DEGUCHI: Really. I myself think that I did a good job. It was possible because I was young.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: You said you worked on a hop farm?

DEGUCHI: Yes. All we had to do was to plant strawberries at the time. The farmer was a German, and he also went through hard times during the war. So, he gave us work on his hop farm. The Kawamuras and my family worked on the farm, picking hops. We worked there for quite a long time.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Where was it?

DEGUCHI: Around Folsom Boulevard. After that work, we also worked on another farm. In June or July, 1945, the Machidas and the Ogawas finally came back, and they could not plant strawberries because it was too late. So, the German farmer gave work to all of us. After the hops bloomed, the Japanese women used machines and the men picked up the hops. On August 15th or 16th, the German farmer told us to go home if we liked after lunch time. Then we saw many cars dragging lots of cans, making loud sounds. Japan had lost the war. So, we went back home.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Were you the only one working on the hop farm at the time? You planted strawberries, taking care of them, and working on the hop farm...

DEGUCHI: My father-in-law and others took care of the strawberries. I think my parents-in-law still could clean up our house at the time.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How old were they?



DEGUCHI: When we were sent to the camp, my mother-in-law was seventy-one years old, and my father-in-law was seventy-four. So, they must have been seventy-five to seventy-six years old. Before we moved to Walnut Grove, my father-in-law was still working in the field. We told him not to work, but then he got angry. "I have to keep eye on the farm." He did not prune enough, so we advised him to cut the branches more. But, he said, "we need lots of crop." Then, he yelled at us. "Do not tell me how to do it!" Even when we asked him to stay at home because it was so cold, my father-in-law wanted to work outside. I used to work where he could not see me working, so he was angry again. Anyhow, he helped with everything. But, after we moved to Walnut Grove, there was no job for him, so he died soon thereafter.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: What was the most difficult thing for you to do after you came to the United States?

DEGUCHI: Well...being poor was the most difficult. My family was a big one, so we could hardly get by by raising strawberries. We had to hire laborers, so we did not earn much after all. Mr. Abe was with the Strawberry Farmers Association, so we could get a loan if we did not have money in the winter. We often could not pay for our laborers, so we got a loan. The association loaned us a lot of money because they knew that we would bring the crop at harvest time. In doing so, we could somehow get by. So, financial matters were the most difficult to deal with. When my children started going to school, my father-in-law took care of financial matters in my family. Before the war, he ordered me to do this and that, and I just did whatever he told me. So, when my children started going



to school, I had to ask my father-in-law for money for their shoes, clothes, etc. Then, he questioned me about how much I needed. I told him, say, "\$20." But, he did not give me the full amount. Maybe \$14-15. So, I could buy only what we really needed. But, things got worn out soon, so I asked him for money again. Then, he said, "Again?" angrily. We did not have much money, so it was difficult, I guess. But, now I think that it was because my father-in-law kept us from spending money that we could survive. Although we were poor, we never made our children go hungry. The children also had adequate clothing. So, I guess we had enough to get by. So, I feel happy.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: What do you like best about America?

DEGUCHI: I like the freedom that I have here. In Japan, everybody cares about where you go, and talks about it. But, here in America, people do not care. That's what I like about America. And, I can do whatever I want to do. In Japan, that is difficult.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: In Japan, a woman couldn't drive, could she?

DEGUCHI: These days, the women drive there.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: But not when you were young.

DEGUCHI: Right. A brother of my mother-in-law used to come and told me that I was so lucky that I had my in-laws living together. He thought I lived a better life. . . .If I had lived in Japan, I would have been confined to the house as matron. But now, I see a lot of Japanese movies, and I feel Japanese wives are better off now. You know, my husband was not in good shape, and I had to take care of my in-laws. So, I was the boss in the family. That's good and bad.



But, if you think it is good, everything can be good. So, I guess I am happy.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: And you can view what you thought was hard as a good experience now.

DEGUCHI: That is right. For example, "loneliness" can be quiet and peaceful. On the other hand, lively and happy time can be just noisy and annoying time. So, I feel happy because my children live very close and they come and visit me often. I can go to church, too. Since I can drive, I can go there every Sunday to the Sacramento Baptist Church. There is a Bible study, and Reverend Arai speaks Japanese. He has been with the church for about three years. Before, Reverend Ushimaru came from Oakland every Sunday. Ever since Reverend Arai came here, we have regular services here. Reverend Ushimaru went to Phoenix. And Reverend Bollinger came here, too. He's been in Okinawa for thirty-three years. He speaks Japanese. I can understand half of the English service. I really appreciate that your father taught me English.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: What was life like in the Camp? Six children and your in-laws, and you...

DEGUCHI: My uncle and aunt came with us because they did not have any children.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Where were they living before the war?

DEGUCHI: Holland. Sutter Island. Right before relocation, they moved here, so we all went to camp together. They shared a room with my parents-in-law, and eight of us lived in the other room. We could get only one room for eight people. So, two other children lived with my in-laws. Our room was the largest. But, Frank left the



camp shortly after, and Betty went to your place (Michigan) . . .

My youngest child always cried when other children went to Sunday school. So, we told the child to stay with the grandmother, then he/she was O.K. Since my-in-laws helped me a lot, I benefited from living with them more than suffered from it. They took care of the children and I could go to Japan. I went to Japan when Roy was just a baby because my mother-in-law took care of him.

Others said, wasn't it hard to take care of in-laws?

SATO-VIACRUSIS: When was it?

DEGUCHI: 1939, I believe. It was before the war. Already, sixteen years had passed since I came to the United States. But for my mother-in-law, I could not have returned to Japan. She told me to go while she was still healthy; otherwise, I would not be able to go at all, because I had to take care of her, too.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Did you have enough money?

DEGUCHI: Well, the depression was already over. In-laws had gone to Japan three to four years before I returned. Then, my father passed away. While he was sick, I asked my in-laws to let me go home, but they did not. In the following year, since I just delivered Roy, I could not still go home. Roy was born in October, then in January my father passed away in Japan. I really wanted to go home. You know, my father-in-law bought me a brand new car, the best one made by Chevy, under my name. It did not cost \$800, though. Anyway, finally, my father died in Japan, so I decided to go home. If my in-laws would not allow me, I would sell the car. I said to them, "I take Roy with me. I do not need the return ticket. If you really need me, send me money to Japan. Otherwise, I will stay in



Japan." Then, I applied for the passport, but still my father-in-law said "No!" He said, "If you go home, I will go to Japan, too." But, he returned to Japan a few years before, so he could not. Then, my Church held a farewell party for me. Finally, my father-in-law gave in, and gave me money so I could go back to Japan. He told me not to sell the car. After the war, I could not go back to Japan soon. My mother died in Japan in 1949. I sent money to Japan, and asked a Japanese doctor to let me and my American doctor know what her condition was and what kind of medicine she needed. You know, at the time, Japan lacked medicine, so I sent it. She had cancer, but after I sent her medicine she recovered for a while. She could go home for New Year's holidays and she was so happy.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Did she recover?

DEGUCHI: Yes. She was not so bad, then.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: What kind of cancer?

DEGUCHI: Women's. She had thirteen children, so I guess that's why. She became well and waited for her turn to get radiation because there were many patients before her. She went home for New Year's holiday and my sister took care of her. But on December 26th, she suddenly suffered a heart attack. I thought that I could give her happiness by going home for New Year's holidays, so I did not feel so sad. But, when my father died, I felt bad and regretted that I could not see him while alive, to see his face again.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How long did you stay in Japan when you went back in 1939?

DEGUCHI: For three months. Looking back now, I encountered a lot of bad



things, but everything gave me a chance to "grow" after all. I did not have much before; now, I have enough, so I feel thankful. I felt I had too many children, but I benefited from having them.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: How many grandchildren do you have now?

DEGUCHI: I have seventeen grandchildren now. I also have ten great-grandchildren. In March, I got three more. All of a sudden, three more! I was so surprised.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: Does everyone come here to visit you?

DEGUCHI: Yes. When I became eighty years old, everybody able to come here. But now, not so often. They said they would like to come visit me this year, but I do not know if they can. Fred, however, took me to Colorado Springs last year. You know, I had to walk a lot at the Salt Lake City Airport to transfer. But, they came to Denver to pick me up, although Denver is seventy miles away from Colorado Springs. I was worried, because it was so far. But, Roy gave me a wheelchair, so that I would not have any problems in either Salt Lake City or Denver. Will came to pick me up. At the Sacramento Airport, they took me to an airplane by wheelchair, and then I could get on a small car in the Salt Lake City Airport.

SATO-VIACRUSIS: But, your legs are not so bad, are they?

DEGUCHI: I have a hard time walking now. I did farm work for a long time, so my legs are not that weak, but...

SATO-VIACRUSIS: You look so young! People probably wonder why such a healthy person is in a wheelchair!

DEGUCHI: When I went to Colorado Springs, they took me to their car, so it was a very comfortable journey. I said to them that I would come again. It was easier than going by car.



SATO-VIACRUSIS: It's been an hour and a half. You must be tired. Thank you for the wonderful accounts of your life.